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THE
COTTAGE:
A
NOVEL.



THE
GEOLOGICAL
MUSEUM



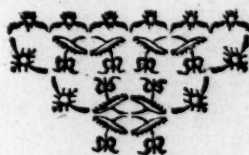
THE
COTTAGE;
A
NOVEL:

In a SERIES of LETTERS.

By Miss MINIFIE, *auth.*
Author of BARFORD-ABBNEY. *Gunny*

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



L O N D O N :

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COPIES

NO. 1

In a Series of Letters

By Miss M. F. L.

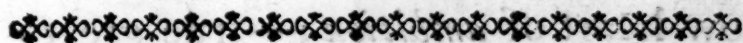
Author of "Barbours-Alexis"

IN THREE VOLUMES





THE
COTTAGE.



LETTER I.

From Lord PORTLAND to Lady
SUSAN COLLINGWOOD.

Nutt-Hill,

THE garden of the world
called a wild desert! Does
Ned Tysant say it is fit
only to be inhabited by
savages?—Tell him, he is a savage
for saying so;—tell him, I will do
Vol. I. B justice

2 THE COTTAGE.

justice to the fair face of plenty,—
to the smiles of hospitality,—to the
enchanting vales of Somerset.

In this county, country gentlemen live as countrymen of England,—*benevolence* is entailed with their estates, they are unacquainted with *ostentation*, they are unacquainted with the high head and low heart of *ambition*;—true greatness and true content are their chosen friends.

Shall I open the door of my heart, and give you a peep; I see your ladyship is prepared to look in; but stop, I am not at leisure just now; I am employed in examining Miss Osborne's heart;—don't frown, be *very* submissive, *very* patient, and perhaps.—

Indeed,

THE COTTAGE. 3

Indeed, Susy, I have seen nature's choicest gift, — perhaps, I say, ere long you may see it; — but I am not disposed to answer questions; I am only disposed to say, I have an encroaching sister, that she steals faster every day into the affections of her brother. Let me hear from you by the next post. — I expect to be scolded for this short epistle; — indeed, I confess, I deserve to be scolded; my next shall speak more fully, till then, adieu, my dear Susy,

Yours,

PORTLAND.

P. S. You have Frank's respects, — a sigh too, — see, I keep nothing back.

B 2 LETTER

LETTER II.

Lady SUSAN COLLINGWOOD to
Lord PORTLAND.

Collingwood-House.

VERY submissive, *very* patient,
—pray keep it for your *wife*,
—let me hear no more of such
doctrine;—was there ever a wo-
man *submissive* and *patient*, unless
she was obliged to be so?—I thought
your lordship had known this long
ago; are you awake or dreaming?
If the latter, sleep on, I won't dis-
turb your delusive dreams:—*sub-*
missive and *patient*,—well, well,
sleep on, I say,—time will.—It
does not signify, I must know
what you mean by nature's
choicest gift;—I am,—in short, I
am

THE COTTAGE. 5

am scratching my cap off to no purpose.—Should it be a sister? But, thanks to my recollection, I have better hopes,—some Somersetshire Adonis. Man was nature's first gift, consequently her best.—Am I not very good *now*, my lord?—Seriously, my sweet, dear brother—Nothing like a little wheedling; I always found it answer with your lordship.—I must, and I will know, a great deal about the family at Nutt-Hill; that is, if *you* please, *Sir*.—I think, *if you please* carries rather a submissive sound, and, believe me, I expect to be rewarded for my condescension.

Tell your friend, if he confers favours in hopes of a return, he is served as all selfish creatures ought to be; I cannot sigh! Tell him I

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cannot, the last that escaped me
was when your lordship flew from
your affectionate,

S. COLLINGWOOD.

LETTER HI.

LORD PORTLAND to Lady SUSAN
COLLINGWOOD.

Nutt-Hill.

NOT a sigh for Frank,—the
last that escaped you was for
your brother,—very well, see what
next Monday will produce, your
ladyship need not be fluttered,—
you may sit yourself down quite
composed and easy; he does not
return with me,—you won't sigh
about that I suppose,—oh Susy,
you are a very miser, my friend
merits

THE COTTAGE. 7

merits every thing,—but how much does he merit from the woman he honours with his preference?—Trifle no longer,—no longer let him complain of your indifference; you will see him in a fortnight,—think of what I have said, think seriously, and not play away your happiness.—He would have returned with me, but that he stays to escort Miss Osborne to Windsor;—her visit is to Lady Nesbit, one of the ladies of the bedchamber, I have promised to carry you there as soon as she arrives.

When I spoke of *Nature's* choicest gift, it was of Miss Osborne; you supposed it might be a *sister*; I could kiss you a thousand times for that supposition,—but indeed I *am* angry, why do you pay our

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sex so high a compliment at the
expence of your own?

She may be your sister, my dear,
the lovely Miss Osborne, I hope,
will be your sister,—then it must
be from yourself if you ever call
her so.

What a wretch is your brother?
no hopes,—yet love to distraction;
the duke of Lester,—yes, the
duke of Lester, he is to be her
husband,—oh, that I could *bate*
him,—my heart would lose half
its burthen, if I could but *bate*
him,—was he not my rival I could
court him for my friend,—now,—
even now I can admire his virtues;
I can frankly own that, till I saw
him, I never saw the man that
could deserve Miss Osborne.

Pardon

THE COTTAGE. 9

Pardon me if I have made you grave,—if I have brought a tear into your laughing eye,—I mean not to pain your feeling heart,—forget what I have said,—forget I am unhappy, and attend to the execution of your commands.

Nutt-Hill, and its situation, is to me the most compleat thing in England,—hard to say, whether it owes most to nature or art; both the dames have been busy, and both smile on their work; but the house, nay, every thing about it, when one considers the inhabitants, appear of very little consequence.

Sir Francis, and Lady Osborne, are the very people, my dear sister, I could wish to supply to you the place of our much revered parents;

10 THE COTTAGE.

sensible; virtuous, mild, affable; though bred in the last age, you see in them the genteel ease of this; free from follies, vanity, or passion for shew, which now rages amongst the generality of mankind.

When I am conversing with Sir Francis and Lady Osborne, I become enamoured with age,—I wish my days half spun out,—but then could I resemble them without accomplishing the great work of virtue?—No.—I should sit down uneasy and dissatisfied,—I should sit down like a poor wretch who has fauntered about a long summer's day in the midst of harvest, and have the mortification to behold the labourers returning in the evening to their peaceful homes, whilst my bed must be made of thorns.

It

THE COTTAGE. 11

It is from this family I perceive how I have been wasting the morning of my days,—I see what an enemy dissipation is to social life.

I want to send you a sketch of Miss Osborne's person, but how can I send you the ten thousand graces,—and their thousand offices that are assigned her,—they sport in her fine brown *hair*,—command in her *eyes*,—smile on her *cheek*, and sit as guards at the door of her *lips*, they play round her *neck*, and are perched on every *finger*.

She is tall, elegantly made,—with skin white as the down of swan, but no colour in her cheeks; *some* connoisseurs in beauty, like *some* critics, will nibble at every thing out of the common road; let them

12 THE COTTAGE.

nibble on,—my pleasures are in discovering perfections, not in marking out defects.—

This form, lovely as it is, compared to her mind, is no more than a fine *basket* which contains *jewels* of immense value.

Her younger brother, a lad of fourteen, resembles much his sister, he has a promising genius, and a great share of good nature; in my opinion, the very person Frank was when I first knew him at Eton.

Come, Miss Madden, I shall introduce you next; this, my dear, is a very good girl, brought up under the wing of Lady Osborne,—an *orphan*, without feeling the heavy loss of parents,—indigent,
yet

THE COTTAGE. 13

yet possessing every thing,—her father and mother, intimate friends of Sir Francis and Lady Osborne, lived in the neighbourhood of Nutt Hill; though the world frowned on them,—though they felt the keenest misfortunes, yet Sir Francis and Lady Osborne, few examples of the kind, never fell off,—never slackened their friendship;—whilst Mr. and Mrs. Madden lived, their purse was opened to their wants, and at their death their arms to receive the *orphan*.

Here comes Frank,—he suspects, I suppose, who I am writing to.

His grace has proposed a party; why do they consult me?—I want them to go on without *me*,—I am not

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not in spirits,—I wish my excuse may be accepted.

Tell me, Lady Susan, is it dishonourable to love Miss Osborne? Do I injure the duke of Lester?—do I injure *her*?—For God's sake tell me?—I must love her, by heaven. I must; but when she is the duchess of Lester, I solemnly protest never to see her more.

Certainly there is nothing criminal in loving,—upon my honour I have never hinted my passion,—no,—not even by a look have I hinted it.

His civility hurts me,—why does he call me Portland?—why rests he so friendly on my shoulder? For my soul I cannot avoid turning
from

THE COTTAGE. 15

from him, when but in ordinary conversation he mentions Miss Osborne ;—let him suspect,—nomatter, I care not what becomes of me :—that this man should be my rival,—this renowned duke of Lester.

Frank again, sure he is one of the most teizing mortals on earth,—well, well, I will go,—'tis much the same whether I go or stay,—in compassion to my *sister* you should not interrupt me just now,—see the fault is not mine.—Do not tell her so.—Indeed I will tell her so.—Send your respects.—Here I don't know what, when you will scarce give me time to write

PORTLAND.

LETTER

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LETTER IV.

Lady SUSAN COLLINGWOOD to
Lord PORTLAND.

Collingwood-House.

BLESS me, my lord, what a
sad scrape are you in ;—talk of
loving Miss Osborne, talk of *loving*
her when she is engaged to another ;
I am really surpris'd ; and does *my*
brother say *this* ?—Why, my dear
Lord, you can have no hopes,—as
I understand the matter, you may
as well come at the morning star
as Miss Osborne.

Your lordship has a deal of re-
solution in common affairs,—shew
some degree at least in this ;—con-
sider, sir,—bethink *yourself* for a mo-
ment,

THE COTTAGE. 17

ment, the duke of Lester,—suppose you was engaged to Miss Osborne—excuse my freedom,—I think it criminal to tell me you *love* her,—it is even criminal to tell yourself so, you may admire her perfections, you may wish me to imitate them, you may wish to be united to one *like* her, but pray, my dear brother, go no farther; nothing is so dangerous as to encourage a *fruitless* passion; what dreadful effects has it not produced? *How* many families has it not made miserable?

Indeed you have distressed me, my heart bleeds; I cannot bear to see my brother unhappy.

No hopes, you say, yet love to distraction; remember, I have a key to your heart, remember too,
you

18 THE COTTAGE.

you have commissioned me to open it without ceremony.

— Pray have you not thought this a match of *interest*? Have you not thought Miss Osborne and her relations led away by *title*, by *splendor*? Have you not flattered yourself, where the heart is not engaged, *trifles* sometimes put an end to such matches? If these are your suggestions give them to the winds.

Can Sir Francis and Lady Osborne thank you at least if you have spoke of them impartially?—Can they incline to an union where their daughter's *affections* are not the principal consideration? Why should *not* Miss Osborne prefer the duke? From her *heart* I mean prefer him.

Is

THE COTTAGE. 19

Is his *person*, which to a sensible mind ought to have little weight, is it *remarkably* plain? Is he deficient in his *understanding*? Is he *avaricious*, *haughty*, *petulant*? No, no, my brother, he *cannot* be either, your own words contradict it.

You will tell me, perhaps, you never did flatter yourself; then why not fly her *now* as if she was really duchess of Lester? Believe me, every moment you stay at Nutt-Hill your perplexities will be increased; if you have promised for me, I certainly will wait on Miss Osborne at Windsor, but I dispense with your lordship's introducing *me*; if you cannot see her without *emotion*, see her no *more*; it is your sister that entreats, it is
the

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the earnest request of your affectionate

S. COLLINGWOOD.

LETTER V.

Miss OSBORNE to Miss MADDEN.

Windfor.

I Never can stay at Windfor,—I am more perplexed, more distressed here than at home.

Molly, my dear Molly, what can I do? Was there ever a situation so unfortunate as mine?—

Marry the duke,—yes, it is indispensable, yes, I must be a wretch all my days.

If

THE COTTAGE. 21

If my heart was *free*, if I did not drag such a weight after me, how should I skip about in this sweet place?—Halcyon days will not always last; what *must* be, *must* be.

I am tired to death,—you must put up with a short epistle,—I need not say the affectionate welcome I met with from Lady Nesbit; in her own house she shines, so indeed you will say she does every where,—very well, I allow it; but she has a peculiar ease, a grace beyond any thing I ever met with in receiving her friends; was it not for this entanglement, how *very* happy should I think myself!

Her ladyship had fifteen card tables yesterday; the company all elegant,

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elegant, and most of them people of distinction.

I like my home, nobody better, but when I had good spirits and a mind at ease, I could have enjoyed Lady Nesbit's life with great relish three months out of the twelve; now every thing is *flat* and *insipid*; company or no company my heart is still in the same uneasy, restless state.

People may talk of going abroad to divert pain,—I say, whether of *body* or *mind*, it must be borne about, it is never to be left behind.

What signifies if I bear a burthen, and cannot lay it down, the place or county that I bear it in? Its weight is not lessened if I walk in the
gardens

THE COTTAGE. 23

gardens of a palace, and I equally shrink and groan under it when surrounded by all the gaiety on earth.

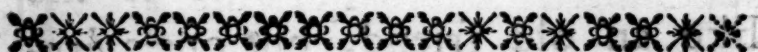
I long to see Lady Susan Collingwood:—my brother sat out this morning for Collingwood-House,—I wish he was returned—I feel awkward without some of my relations, I wonder if Lord Portland will come back with him,—I declare his lordship seems to me like an old friend, but one's *brother's* schoolfellows, I don't know *how*, are generally looked upon as natural to a family.

For the first time must I turn hypocrite, I must write my mother I am *very* happy, *very* high spirited, and I know not what, else
I shall

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I shall afflict those hearts I wish to fill with satisfaction; but tell me how I can *give* satisfaction when I *feel* it not? Tell me my dear Molly how I can imprison my sorrows? How I can set bounds to them, so that they may not steal to the breasts of the best of parents, and rob them of a treasure which is torn from the heart of your

AUGUSTA OSBORNE.



LETTER VI.

From the same to the same.

Windsor.

DID I say I *would* marry his Grace? Was it possible I *could* say so?—Be not surprised, I am really

really resolved;—yes Molly, I am resolved *never* to be his,—let me repeat, since it is out, I *never* will, my heart grows lighter, it has shook off half its load.

Nothing hangs so heavy as remorse, and can any remorse equal that which must arise from giving the *hand* without the *heart*; every thing is light in competition with it, in my breast it finds no *softer* appellation than a *lawful* prostitution.

Perhaps I shall be thought *dishonourable* by the noble minded duke, by my *parents*, by *brothers* that I doat on, by my *bosom* friend, what is *all this* if I stand self-acquitted?

26 THE COTTAGE.

When I told you I would give my heart to his grace,—that it should testify my gratitude, I was a *vain*, foolish *boaster*, I did not then know the difference betwixt *gratitude* and a *more* tender passion.

Oh, my dear Molly, I find the heart, if it wanders from its home, will not change its dwelling, be it ever so kindly invited, unless it fixes on its own abode;—how refractory, how very perverse, to refuse certain happiness, and perhaps one day steal out unbidden a low despicable figure, standing like a thief watching for entrance at shut doors,—should it enter by surprize or accident, like all intruders, it is neglected, slighted, scoffed at.

So,

THE COTTAGE. 27

So, so, my *brother* returned,
excuse me for a moment.

Lady Susan has certainly smiled
on him, I never saw him in such
charming spirits; very civil, I think,
when Collingwood-House is at so
small a distance, Lord Portland
might have taken a *morning* ride,
just to *ask* how I did;—to
morrow I am to be honoured with
Lady Susan's company, her brother
sets out at the same time for Lord
Dartmouth's,—the celebrated Miss
Boyle is there;—all the world, you
know, are out of their wits about
Miss Boyle.

A card this moment from the
duke,—he dines here to morrow.
Had I best tell him my de:ermi-
nation? I don't *believe* I shall,—

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I don't think I shall have resolution,—a letter must speak for me.

I have a deal to say to my brother,—I shall write again tomorrow, after Lady Susan is gone.

How happy I am to repose all my anxieties in a bosom, where rests sincerity, honour, and compassion; send me what they dictate, delay not to give me all their reasonings,—they must have weight with your

AUGUSTA OSBORNE.

LET-

LETTER VII.

From the same to the same.

Windfor.

I AM very oddly circumstanced, in my conscience, his grace will spare me the pain of discarding him;—the affair was this; bless me how my heart beats,—I shall never get out of my fright.

But just dressed when Lord Portland's coach drove up to the door,—I was surprised to see his lordship step out,—I became more surprized when he gave his hand to a young Lady, who, I soon perceived, could not be Lady Susan;—in an instant another followed, and, from de-

scription, I knew that to be her ladyship.

Lady Nesbit being below to receive them, I flew to the door of Frank's dressing room, whispering, thro' the key hole, Lady Susan was come,—is she *really* come, my dear Augusta, said he, flying to let me in?—Stop, I'll go down with you instantly;—Lord help me, I thought I should have sunk with laughing, not recollecting himself, he was running down in his waistcoat, and for the sake of the jest I let him go half way, before I told him of the mistake;—indeed I ought to have made her ladyship a very low curtsy, it was owing to his impatience to behold her that I escaped with only a gentle tap on my cheek.

Observe,

Observe, this comical adventure put it out of my head to tell Frank, Lord Portland was below, which made him start and look with surprise, when his lordship took him by the hand.

The form of introduction passed, I placed myself next Lady Susan,—I don't know why, but I had a vast inclination to sit by her ladyship, not that I should have done it, had I cared a fig for my appearance.

Never was a human form so perfectly beautiful,—I am but clumsy at the descriptive, or you should see her,—*such* grace, *such* majesty, *such* winning softness, such easy freedom,—in short, so much of

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the *lovely* that I find the outlines too much for my pen.

Could you believe I should not recollect Miss Abington? The Miss Abington so much courted, so much admired the last season you and I were at Bath,—this was the person I saw Lord Portland hand first out of the coach, and who I told you I was sure could not be Lady Susan.

Ah, my dear Molly, did you see her now you would not wonder I had no idea of her face,—poor soul! how altered, yet she still retains that sweetness which captivated all hearts, she retains it amidst pain, sickness, an emaciated frame, and a wretched fortune,—who could have supposed she

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she could have borne all this with such equanimity; to be forsaken at once of *health, fortune, lovers, friends*? What a world do we live in!—Not a soul out of her numerous acquaintance, except Lady Susan Collingwood, has deigned to enquire for her since the death of her unnatural uncle;—she has been many days on the road from ——— to Collingwood-House; Wednesday she sets out for the Wells at Bristol,—I am afraid never to return!

Poor Miss Jamima Abington,—my heart bleeds for her,—fair flower, how soon cropped by the rude hand of misfortune!—But she will bloom again, she will bloom in a garden, secured from blast, from every rude hand. Ruminating on the woes of others

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I forget my own,—it is but for a *moment* I forget them;—would I was so far on in my journey as Miss Jamima Abington.

What would become of me if the duke really was jealous? Will not my breaking with him confirm his suspicions?—Will it push him on?—*Mercy*, to be sure he *could* not, *would* not, think of taking his life;—I solemnly protest his lordship never, by a hint, a hint the most distant;—but I forget, my dear Molly, the large tract that lays betwixt us,—I forget you was at Nutt-Hill,—that you was not witness to the trifling accident, which, perhaps, may be of the last importance to your friend.

You

THE COTTAGE. 35

You know the aversion I have to a spider, you likewise know the pains I have taken to overcome this ridiculous aversion;—how the venomous reptile came inside my tucker I cannot divine;—Lady Susan first espied it, and whispered me, I had a little fly on my neck; the moment my eyes beheld its bloated form, I gave a scream, attempting to leave the room, but was prevented by her ladyship and Miss Abington,—the latter assisting, Lady Susan took the enemy from my bosom, and crushed it with her foot.

I terrified every body with my screams; Lord Portland, not knowing what he did, took one of my hands, and putting it to his lips, cried, my dear Miss Osborne, do

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say if you are ill,—do have some drops.

At that instant,—whilst my hand was in his, entered the duke, ushered in by Lady Nesbit, and my brother, who had left the room a few moments before all this happened.

Had I really been the property of his grace, I could not have suffered more from confusion, nor he betrayed greater marks of surprize; his countenance, which, you know, is ruddy, instantly changed to a deadly pale;—I saw the drops stand on his forehead when he addressed the circle.

Miss Abington has a penetrating eye; if I mistake not, a very compassionate

passionate *heart* ;—she perceived my distress, and trembled for me ;—I think I see now how she looked when his grace, with an air sulky and disappointed, took a chair and drew it from the company towards the window.

I called up my most condescending looks to assuage his resentment,—asked, if he ventured in his *Phæton* with his young spirited horses,—if he had an agreeable journey from *Castlebrook* ; he looked at me whilst I spoke, answered *yes* or *no*, I do not recollect which,—*bowed* graciously, but seemed not to attend to what I said.

Lady Susan began to relate to Lady Nesbit how I had been frightened by the spider,—whilst she was speaking

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speaking, Miss Abington in a low voice said she had dropped her fan in the lobby.—By the manner in which she spoke, I thought it only an excuse to leave the room, so did not attempt to ring the bell, but getting up, she followed me to the door, and I immediately shewed her to Lady Nesbit's dressing room.

Poor soul! She is excessively weak,—so weak, her breath was almost gone before she got to the top of the stairs,—every little thing affects such tender frames;—seating her on a sofa, I sat silent a few moments, before I ventured to ask if she was well,—not quite well Miss Osborne, she replied,—I have very poor health, I wanted sadly to get into the air, I fancy the room

we

we sat in is rather close; you perceived, I imagine, what I said of my fan was only an excuse.

Here she burst into tears, which greatly affected me, though I know it is common for people labouring under pain and sickness, to have very tender sensations; yet I could not avoid a thousand melancholy reflections.

Seeming to take no notice of this sudden alteration, I ran to the cabinet, and, taking from it a bottle of *Eau de luce*, poured into a glass of water some drops, which, with much difficulty, I prevailed on her to swallow.

Recovering herself, she made a thousand apologies for the trouble
 she

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she had occasioned, at the same time intreated I would not drop a word of her folly to Lady Susan, or the rest of the company, and, bathing her eyes in cold water, to get off the redness, desired me to tell her, if I thought she might return to the *drawing room* without discovering her weakness.

At this instant Lady Nesbit entered the apartment; seeing, I suppose, by my looks, something was the matter, asked, if Miss Abington had been ill;—no Madam, she replied, I am not *ill*,—your ladyship's rooms are very warm,—I only wanted a little air.—

Lady Nesbit enquired no farther, but said tenderly, taking her hand,

THE COTTAGE. 41

hand, when it is agreeable for you, Miss Abington, to go down, I will order the fire to be lessened;—and to shew her she was not desirous to draw us from that apartment, obligingly produced a fine collection of old China;—a fortunate circumstance, as it gave the sweet creature time to recruit her shattered spirits.

At our return to the drawing room, we found his grace deeply engaged in conversation with Lady Susan; but, seeing us, he immediately became silent, and appeared more embarrassed than before.

We were scarcely seated, when their majesties and the royal family, returning from an airing, drove by
the

42 THE COTTAGE.

the windows; they were immediately followed by the marquis of —, in his own carriage;—he bowed low as he passed us, and, I observed, nodded to the duke, which his grace perceiving, apologized to Lady Nesbit, said, he had something of importance with the marquis, hoped he should return by dinner, if not he would send a note.

Just as I expected, before three a card was delivered, that an affair of the last consequence prevented him the pleasure of dining with us, but that he flattered himself with spending the evening at her ladyship's house.

This

This mysterious behaviour I could construe to nothing but jealousy; I spent a most uneasy, restless day,—thoughtful, absent, lost to every thing.—I wonder what *ideas* Lady Susan has formed, what her amiable friend thinks of me!—Lord Portland must indeed be surprized, *greatly* surprized, that is, if he does not suspect.—Heaven forbid!—I tremble, even *now*, to recollect how often his examining eye turned towards me, how he looked when the duke's card was delivered;—Lord bless me, what shall I do?—What can I do, my dear Molly, if this trifling affair should be attended with fatal consequences?—Was ever any thing so unfortunate?—What a shocking reptile is a spider.

His

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His lordship and the two ladies left us at seven,—Lady Susan gave me a pressing invitation to Collingwood House, insisted on my fixing a day, and she would come herself and fetch me.

In this perplexing state, how is it possible to say what day, or when? Her ladyship would hear of no excuse; said positively she would be here Tuesday next at breakfast, but I can assure her, if, between this and that, I am not cleared of my suspicions, the universe should not tempt me to enter the doors of Collingwood house.

You are certainly impatient to know if the duke returned to us in the evening,—what *humour* he returned

turned in,—if he had still the appearance of jealousy,—and the subject of our conversation.

Yes Molly, he returned, but it would puzzle me to tell you in what humour; neither angry or pleased, neither sulky or complacent, frowning or smiling; in short, neither *this*, *that*, or the *other*; the subject of our conversation, again I am puzzled,—we had many subjects,—he *dwelt* on none that had any interest in *my* family, on *none* that concerned *himself*, said very little of Lady Susan, less of Lord Portland, yet he talked incessantly, but it was of Miss Abington;—God knows, I wish I may be right,—every thing is a mystery, my eyes and ears are turned deceivers,—

46 THE COTTAGE.

deceivers; one moment they tell me all will end happily,—the next, that a thousand misfortunes hang over my head.

To-morrow my fate is fixed;—to-morrow I will entreat his grace to think of me no more,—I cannot live longer, racked by suspense,—indeed, indeed I am undone by a too high sense of obligations,—I might have been grateful, but then I might have shewn my gratitude without endangering my *peace*.

If Lord Portland goes as he intends to Lord Dartmouth's, I will oblige Lady Susan, and spend a few days at Collingwood House; I should think no exceptions can be taken if *he* is abroad;—after
what

what has happened, I acknowledge it would be *imprudent*, supposing the duke and I should part on *good* terms,—it would be imprudent for me to visit there, when his lordship is at home.

I want of all things to see Miss Boyle,—in my opinion there cannot be a more pleasing sight than a beautiful woman; she is acquainted with Lady Susan, but I do not find her ladyship expects her this summer.

God grant the duke may hear me with patience,—that I may experience that generosity which he has shewn on a thousand occasions.

48 THE COTTAGE.

I cannot stay here after the affair is blown,—indeed I cannot; his grace you know my dear is the darling of mankind,—it is even become *fashionable* to admire his virtues, I wish it was as fashionable to imitate them; I wish too that my *perverse* heart could bow down before them, that it could acknowledge the fountain from which they flow, to be the fountain of all its felicity.

I am determined to bury myself in the country, I will try to atone for my perverseness,—by retirement, by seeking out the distressed of others, by doing all in my power to relieve them; by continually offering up my prayers for the duke of Lester, and that he may despise me sufficiently for his future repose.

Oh

THE COTTAGE. 49

Oh that this perplexing affair was happily ended, and I once more in the arms of my much loved, much honoured friends in Somersetshire.

Thank my dear, dear mother, for her tender epistle, it shall be answered by the next post;—tell her and my dear father, that duty wastes not by absence; tell your own heart I wish to live there for ever, and tell it likewise, none knows its value like your affectionate

AUGUSTA OSBORNE.

50 THE COTTAGE.

LETTER VIII.

LORD PORTLAND to FRANCIS
OSBORNE Esquire.

Collingwood-House.

YOUR sister broke with the duke!—Is it *true*, Frank?—May I trust my *senses*? Assure me she *has*;—say she is *disengaged*, and you pronounce Portland most happy of mankind;—don't *start*, in honour I could not tell you so before;—come to me, dear Osborne; I have ordered my horses,—I will meet you five miles short of Windsor;—Lady Susan expects you, I have told her you come here this evening.

Yours,

PORTLAND.

LET-

LETTER IX.

FRANCIS OSBORNE Esquire to
LORD PORTLAND.

Windsor.

MY lord I cannot see you *this* evening, you know not how I have been distressed,—how my heart has been rent betwixt affection for my sister, and gratitude for my noble friend.—

I fet out to morrow with his grace for Castlebrook, from thence I proceed to Nutt Hill.—Heaven can only tell the terrors I feel, when I consider the disappointments I must bring there.

D 2

Pray,

52 THE COTTAGE.

Pray, my dear Lord, unless you mean to make yourself and me compleatly miserable,—think not of my sister,—she never can be yours.

Had you seen her on her knees, a posture even his grace could not prevent her from; had you seen the solemn manner in which she addressed him, when she protested never to give her hand, unless he requested it, nor then, unless she saw him happy with the most deserving of her sex,—had your lordship witnessed *this* scene,—you would never think of my dear Augusta, but as the *sister* of your friend.

My

THE COTTAGE. 53

My lord, you know not the value of the heart she has given up, a *heart* that knows no guile, a *heart* that generosity and benevolence occupy as their own.

It was for *me*, it was for an *imprudent* brother, that she has so long struggled against her inclinations.

What will your lordship think? What will Lady Susan think, if I discover my follies, if I discover through what motive my sister first encouraged the duke? Noble minded creature,—how *extreme* thy affection,—how *extreme* thy gratitude, not to be equalled sure in woman.

If your lordship can conceal any thing from the divine Lady Susan,

in pity to your friend conceal what follows.

At the last Newmarket race, I went from Oxford with a large party,—we came on the course just as Mr. Fleming's Sally, and Sir Jacob Turner's Whitefoot started,—the bets run amazingly high; I looked on with surprize, I could scarce credit my senses, to behold *rational* beings risk such large sums on the fleetness of a beast;—I was busy to observe the countenances of those who had stakes depending; how did I congratulate myself with being a spectator free from solicitude,—how did I exult when Sally came snorting and foaming to the post, to feel no palpitations on beholding Whitefoot distanced.

A mul-

THE COTTAGE. 55

A multitude of bettors surrounded the victorious steed, those, flushed with success, looked as if they were come to pay their adoration to the beast,—rode round,—and round,—admired every limb, praised her forehead, talked with raptures of her neck, as if it had been a favourite lady's,—whilst the unfortunate *knights*, spite of endeavours to hide their chagrin, hung their heads, uttering a thousand invectives against Whitefoot's rider.

My attention was thus engaged when Sir George Dormer's coach, drawn by six Arabians, flew swiftly by me,—in a moment it was rumoured the beautiful countess of — was in the carriage,—having

56 THE COTTAGE.

a slight acquaintance with Lady Dormer, I embraced the opportunity, and rid directly up to the coach, the beautiful countess indeed was there, and by her side your *lovely* sister; encouraged by Lady Susan's sweet affability, I solicited the honour of her hand at the ball, she bowing, smiled my happiness, and Lady Dormer crowned it, by engaging me at tea.

For ever could I have feasted my eyes on the twin stars, but good manners obliged me to make way for the duke of M—— and Lord P——, who pressed forwards to pay their compliments to the ladies.

Full

Full of transport I returned to my companions, and found them making bets on the next horses that were to run,—no rhetorick was wanting to engage me,—but I was *then* myself, I was *proof* against their delusive arguments, I had *not* forgot my *parents* or my *family*,—would it had been poison that made me forget those ties.

From the course I went to Lady Dormer's lodgings, her ladyship's beautiful guests had drawn together a great number of the first nobility, amongst whom was the duke of Lester;—I had not seen his grace since he came to his title, we were like brothers at Westminster, but having seldom had an opportunity of seeing him after I was removed to Eton, I reasonably sup-

58 THE COTTAGE.

posed our former friendship forgot ;
 you will judge how agreeably I
 was surprized to be accosted with
 the *same* unrestraint,—the *same*
 warmth as when his schoolfellow.

His grace danced that evening
 with the charming countess;—
 could the world boast two such
 lovely women as our partners;—
nobody else was admired,—*nobody*
 else looked at;—their praises in
 loud whispers might be heard from
 every mouth, the smile of an
 angel spoke in all their features,—
 in their movement such harmony,
 as exceeded the charms of music.

The ball ended, and the ladies
 in their chairs;—his grace pro-
 posed to me drinking their healths
 in

in claret,—many of our acquaintance were present, and adjourned with us,—the glass went briskly round,—it was pushed both by the victors and the vanquished,—one to keep up the fire *success* had kindled, the other to blow up the sparks *ill success* had damped.

The duke of Lester and myself were the only persons present who had not then engaged on the turf; at that time, indeed, we seemed determined against it,—but how weak are resolutions, when reason is drowned;—let me perish if I can bear the recollection of my imprudence;—well might Shakespear speak of wine as an enemy that steals away the brains.

Almost

60 THE COTTAGE.

Almost five in the morning before we parted, and, falling into a sound sleep the instant I was in bed, my follies were forgot, till reminded of them some hours after by the duke;—coming to my bedside, he took my hand, crying, Frank, what, are you dead? How can you sleep?—D'ye know how finely we are taken in?—Taken in! *Taken in!* retorted I, staring like one awoken from a trance,—*how* taken in?—Why, replied he, can't you recollect what bets you have made? Not I, faith, my lord duke, something of your being taken in, I remember.—True, Frank, I am taken in but not for five thousand pounds.—The devil, said I, jumping up in the bed,—

five

THE COTTAGE. 61

five thousand pounds! I have but two hundred pieces in my pocket.

This the fine plight I was in,—I thought would have made me run mad; six hundred pounds a year, every shilling I had to expect till the death of my father.

Come, come, Frank, said his grace, prithee don't be in despair, fortune may be on your side,—be expeditious in dressing,—you know we are engaged at the public breakfast.

Whilst the least hope remained, whilst I could flatter myself with a possibility of success, I assumed an air of cheerfulness, and, picking up some of my unthinking companions,

62 THE COTTAGE.

nions, mixed with the company at the rooms.

— Every moment appeared an hour, till the time came to go on the course,—even there I affected an unconcern;—but how, my lord, could I affect it, when my fate was decided?—On the last horse which ran,—horrid reflection! I had two thousand pounds depending, and that horse as unsuccessful as those I had betted on before.

What could equal my distress?—I suppose I appeared like a creature bereft of reason, I rid up and down amidst the multitude, scarce knowing where I was.

Whilst

THE COTTAGE. 63

Whilst gaping for my lost peace, staring from side to side, I felt a hand on my shoulder, at the same moment a voice pronounce, Frank, I must speak with you immediately;—judge my surprize,—it was the duke of Lester, holding out his pocket book;—oblige me, dear Frank, said he; Oblige you in what, my lord duke?—Why, to be plain, Frank, I leave New-market instantly, the evening is far advanced, I chuse not to travel with so large a sum as I have at present about me;—you know I had always your purse at school; take mine, return it when convenient, remember I only lend it, an obligation so slight can never pain you.

Here

64 THE COTTAGE.

Here I interrupted him ; really, till then, I could make no reply to such unprecedented generosity, it took from me the very power of speech.

Stop, stop, my Lord Duke, said I, how shall I, how *can* I, accept your generous offer ? As I hope for mercy, your goodness is more difficult to be supported, than my ill fortune.

Consider, dear Frank, he returned,—how many guineas you lent me at school, five shillings were then of more consequence to your friend than five thousand pounds are now,—you *must* take it, Frank,—you *shall* take it, forcing the notes into my reluctant hand, which,

THE COTTAGE. 65

which, as soon as he had done, he whipped up his horse, wishing me well, and rid away full speed.

Sick of Newmarket, I resolved to leave it immediately, I only staid to discharge my debts of honour, setting out on my journey that very evening.

On my return to Oxford, I wrote to the duke, declaring it was impossible for me to have an easy moment till I had given him proper security for the money, that I was determined to risk my father's displeasure, and lay the whole affair before him.

The next post brought me a very angry reply to this letter,—
his

66 THE COTTAGE.

his grace solemnly protested, if ever I mentioned a syllable of the affair to my father, he should hold me *incapable* of friendship; adding, the vast satisfaction he had proposed in renewing the intimacy began in our boyish days;—consider, my dear Osborne, said he, would you accept a security from me on the like occasion?—Or would you have me risk a parent's happiness?

This was sufficient to silence me;—could I venture, after this, to renew the subject?

In one of the frequent visits his grace made me at Oxford, I proposed a little excursion into Somersetshire; here again his amiable disposition was conspicuous,—he
not

THE COTTAGE. 67

not only accepted the invitation, but came into the scheme with such alacrity, with such agreeable acquiescence, that we sat out the morning succeeding the evening on which I had proposed the tour.

His grace expressed exquisite satisfaction all the time he staid at Nutt-Hill—he was full of the praises of my father and mother,—told me, twenty times in a day, that my sister was a sweet creature, and once, I remember, he sighed deep when he said, she resembled much a young lady he once loved to distraction; but, upon my honour, I never suspected he meant any thing serious, till a few days before your lordship came down; his visits indeed were frequent, and I
was

68 THE COTTAGE.

was fool enough to place them to my own account.

Sorely have I repented telling Augusta the obligations I was under to this generous man,—I am but too sensible she accepted him more from gratitude than affection.

She is very young, my Lord, scarce seventeen;—to a girl of her refined notions, the duke's noble character could be no small inducement;—the joy her parents expressed at her happy prospects, in short every thing helped to persuade her she ought to be his;—but I am convinced she never has been cheerful, or seemed to enjoy herself like what she used to do, before he made proposals.

I cannot

THE COTTAGE. 69

I cannot paint my distress, when she told me the situation of her heart;—the consequence of my friend's displeasure appeared light, compared to my sister's happiness, she *begged*, she *entreated*, I would sound him on the matter;—if he heard me with patience, she said, she would summon resolution, and speak to him herself.

Indeed, Lord Portland, mine was a dreadful task,—but such a one as I could not be excused from, and, to add to my perplexities, I expected every moment that his grace would enter, as we were all that morning going to see a review in Hyde Park.

Before

70 THE COTTAGE.

Before I could deliberate how or in what manner to break the affair, behold the door opened, and he flew into the room, whilst Augusta was sitting by me, drowned in tears.

Surprize could never be expressed in such lively colours, as in the features of this *great*, this *good* man; I thought he would have fallen to the earth;—Do I intrude, Frank, said he, standing with the door in his hand?—For heaven's sake, speak?—What is the matter?

If, returned I, your grace will step into the garden, you shall know the cause;—so, without speaking to my sister, he withdrew, and I followed.

God

THE COTTAGE. 71

God knows how I broke the matter,—it was an undertaking I would not go through again for the universe; but, instead of being warm or upbraiding, as I expected, he said he revered her ingenuity; that, though he was unfortunate, he must admire principles of honour.

He pressed to know if Augusta had been told any thing to his disadvantage,—if she had heard of any former engagement;—I assured him the contrary, and that I believed she hated herself for a perverseness unconquerable.

He entreated to see her, desiring I would say, it was only to sue for
a con-

72 THE COTTAGE.

a continuance of her friendship that he desired an interview.

When peace is restored to the breast, how soon does every feature declare it,—the eyes, the cheeks,—it glides through the whole face, it is even proclaimed in a dimple; thus did *her* features speak, and, *thus* harmonized, I led her to the duke.

My dear Miss Osborne, said he, taking her hand, as he advanced to meet us,—I wish it may be in my power to recompence you for the uneasiness I have caused;—*tell* me you will honour me with your friendship,—*say* you do not *hate* me, and from this moment you are free from any engagement to me.

Too

Too much overcome by his goodness to reply, she fell on her knees, whilst his grace, softened almost to tears, endeavoured to lift her up ;—he begged, he prayed, he entreated, she would not kneel ; but his prayers, his entreaties were ineffectual, till she declared what is mentioned in the first part of my letter.

My Lord, I can give you no idea of the scene which followed,—I don't believe I have been myself since, but my sister *is* happy, . and, for *such* a sister, one would forego any thing ; let me repeat, my Lord, you *can* have *no* hopes ; his grace, by some hints he dropped, seems now determined on a single life.

72 THE COTTAGE.

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74 THE COTTAGE.

In the name of wonder, how came your lordship to hear the match was broke off?—It happened but the day after you left us; his grace has continued his visits as usual;—if possible, his expressions of friendship to me are warmer than ever, and his behaviour to Augusta, instead of being cool,—is quite affectionate.

Pray, what airy spirit is this you keep in pay?—I want to take one into my service;—in compassion recommend me to a pretty little boy with wings,—he shall be paid well, he shall see Lady Susan ten times every day,—I shall charge him not to whisper a word of Newmarket *race*; remember *that*, my dear Lord, remember I could
never

THE COTTAGE. 75

never venture into the presence of her ladyship, *after* she was acquainted with my imprudence.

In less than a fortnight you shall see me,—I stay but a few days in Somersetshire.

Yours, &c.

F. OSBORNE.

E 2

LET-

LETTER X.

Miss OSBORNE to Miss MADDEN.

Windfor.

WHAT think you of the duke? Is he not possessed of every virtue?—I am really ashamed of myself; Was there ever such a perverse creature as your friend?—But my brother has told you all; my dear brother,—what a task was his!—How *much* do I owe him!—It shall be the business of my life to seek for opportunities to return the vast debt.

You will see me, my dear Molly,
the happiest creature on earth;—
very

THE COTTAGE. 77

very different are the effects of *pain* and *pleasure*, but the *latter* is never *properly* enjoyed without a taste of the *former*;—our lives are judiciously checquered,—if no *down hill*,—what dull expectations in *ascending*:—If no *fours*, how cloying *sweets*!—If no *clouds*, how unwelcome *sunshine*.

My felicity encreases;—three whole days I have been honoured with the company of Lady Susan, her ladyship came on Tuesday, as she appointed;—she tried all her rhetorick to get me to return with her that evening, but finding me obstinate, she condescended to remain here till this morning.

78 THE COTTAGE.

It is impossible to say how happy her presence made me,—her disposition is such, that if one was really miserable, she would cheat one into happiness;—was I to draw her picture, I would represent a *dove* and *lark* flying to her bosom.

I suppose my brother will repent his journey in sackcloth and ashes; but tell him, for his comfort, I set down a thousand affectionate things her ladyship said to me;—I set them down to *his* account.

I am really apprehensive poor Miss Abington is dead,—she promised to write to Lady Susan, on her arrival at Bristol,—but not one line has her ladyship received;—
she

she talked of lodging at Mrs. Denson's, near the wells.—I wish you would write to our *grocer*, and get him to go to Mrs. Denson and enquire if she has been there;—I promised Lady Susan, if she hears nothing of her before, when I go with my father and mother to Sir Hugh Melcombe's, I will then make particular enquiries for her myself.

I am impatient to hear if my father and mother blame the step I have taken;—I know their clemency, and hope *every* thing from it.

If you miss a post, I shall have sat out before your letter arrives.—

80 THE COTTAGE.

Lady Nesbit is very angry,—
but I tell her ladyship, if she will
come and fetch me next summer,
she won't get rid of her visiter quite
so easily.

It is but a few days, my dear
Molly, when you and I shall again
partake together our delightful
evening walks,—I dream every
night of the little temple in the
wood, it is now so strong in my
ideas, that I suppose I shall be
working or reading there till to-
morrow eight o'clock.

Adieu my dearest friend, yours,
most affectionately,

AUGUSTA OSBORNE.

LET-

LETTER XI.

LORD PORTLAND to FRANCIS
OSBORNE, Esquire.

Collingwood-House.

WELL, Frank,—if there are
no hopes;—but first I must
have it confirmed by Miss Osborne;
if there are *no* hopes, I repeat,
Portland is most unfortunate of
mankind;—as a friend I charge
you, by the love you bear my
sister I *charge* you, keep from
Miss Osborne the secret of my
heart;—since I know her reso-
lution, I will wait with patience
the events of providence;—I will

E 5

not

82 THE COTTAGE.

not presume to hint my passion, whilst his grace is single.

Are you not acquainted, my dear Osborne, with what depends on *his* marrying?—Do you think he will willingly let his estate go to people whom I am convinced he must despise?—No, no, Frank, these are things not to be overcome;—the duke of Lester will not let a low purse-proud race succeed him,—he will not let those sprung from a dunghill strut and lord it over the footsteps of his ancestors. What could possess the late duke to entail his estate on such a crew?—Did he outlive his senses, or had he ever any?

I hope

THE COTTAGE. 83

I hope, Miss Osborne, before this, is partaking the social delights of Nut Hill;—mention her often in your letters,—say if she *looks* well, if she *is* happy,—tell me the very day we are to expect you;—five or six weeks at least you must think of favouring us with your company;—you will meet the reception you wish from Lady Susan;—I am always most sincerely, yours,

PORTLAND.

E 6

LET-

LETTER XII.

Miss OSBORNE to Lady SUSAN
COLLINGWOOD.

Nutt-Hill.

I Only waited for a line from Lady Melcombe before I embraced the honour your ladyship so condescendingly requested.

I am greatly distressed about poor Miss Abington,—God only knows what is become of her;—the person Miss Madden wrote to, has been with Mrs. Denson;—she informed him there was a young lady, of that name, in her lodgings about a month since, that she staid only a week, and was the whole

THE COTTAGE. 85

whole time excessively ill;—Mrs. Denson is ignorant where she went when she left her lodgings, but supposes it cannot be at any great distance, as she could scarce bear the fatigue of an airing, having frequently fainted after a drive of five or six miles.

I dreaded to send this melancholy account to your ladyship, which caused me to defer writing till I heard from Lady Melcombe, who at my request has made an unwearied search;—not a street in Bristol but her ladyship's servants have traversed;—she wrote to her *apotbecary* in Bath,—he has examined *every* lodging there,—been several mornings at the *pump-room*, but *all* without success.

In

86 THE COTTAGE.

In a few days I go with my father and mother on our annual visit to our worthy relations Sir Hugh and Lady Melcombe, who live scarce six miles out of Bristol;—your ladyship may depend on my best services,—I shall spare no pains to discover, if possible, where this amiable young lady is concealed.

I know, Lady Susan, you will rejoice to find I am not condemned by my parents,—their lenity, their tenderness, are both conspicuous; but how much is it felt by their children!—How much of it do they hourly experience!—I hope I am not guilty of a sin in wishing to die before them;—indeed I often petition I never may outlive
the

the fatal time;—God Almighty knows my heart, and he best knows if I could support so great a loss.

Forget not, dear Lady Susan, your promise of next May, much *wished* for month, *favourite* season; but *January*, *February*, or *March*, would be more welcome to us than the lovely month of *May*, if with them we could behold your ladyship; endeavour, dear Madam, to contract the days which intercept the heart-felt satisfaction of your

AUGUSTA OSBORNE.

LET-

88 THE COTTAGE.

LETTER XIII.

From the same to the same.

YOUR Ladyship, must pardon me, if take no other notice of your entertaining packet than to say it is received ;—I have *such* things to unfold,—such surprising events ;—but stop, your ladyship shall not remain in suspense ;—Miss Abington is under the same roof with your friend ;—Heaven be praised, I have *discovered* her, I have *discovered* her *heavy* afflictions, her *exalted* piety, her *noble* resignation.

-Let

THE COTTAGE. 89

Let me try to recollect every little incident; dear Lady Susan, you must have patience,—the subject requires I should be circumstantial.

Just three weeks I have been with my father and mother at *Sbasto Place*, the seat of Sir Hugh Melcombe;—scarce a day has past, since we arrived, but Sir Hugh dispatched messengers to all the adjacent villages;—your ladyship cannot imagine how much both himself and lady were interested in finding out Miss Abington, tho', till this morning, all attempts proved unsuccessful.

It is Sir Hugh's custom, every day at twelve, to go an airing,—

Lady

90 THE COTTAGE.

Lady Melcombe usually attends him; that is, when she has not company to detain her at home, which happened to be the case just now. My father and mother, not being at all fond of exercise, it generally falls out that I am Sir Hugh's companion.

This day we sallied forth, rather earlier than common,—he wanted to shew me a beautiful wood, about ten miles distant, in the center of which he proposes building a summer retreat.

I am vastly happy in our little excursions;—Sir Hugh is not only one of the most sensible, but one of the best natured men on earth,—he points out every thing worthy observation,

THE COTTAGE. 91

observation,—nothing that does honour to the great creator escapes his notice;—his observations on the animal and vegetable world afford the highest entertainment to a rational mind;—I have known him order the coachman to stop ten times in the space of an hour;—a fine prospect calls his attention,—sometimes a fine river,—now a flock of sheep,—a flight of curious birds,—a swarm of bees,—or *perhaps* an uncommon plant that grows on the side of a bank.

I know not how, this morning, we drove on in serious chat, till within three miles of the wood;—here I began to look about me;—two steep hills lay just before us,—so steep, that, when we got to the
top

92 THE COTTAGE.

top of the first, the valley beneath seemed scarce perceptible,—but descending, I never beheld any thing equal to its verdure ;—the breadth of the valley I suppose could not exceed three hundred yards, yet in length far beyond my ken.—

—Down the sides of both these hills trickled several streams like chrystal, emptying themselves into a brook that ran at the foot of a poor little cottage.

Coming near the hovel, I perceived an old man, bent with age, bearing a faggot on his back, which he had taken from a stack by the road side,—his hair, time worn and sun burnt, was turned of a yellowish white, and he appeared
sinking.

sinking under his burthen; when with his staff he opened a little hatch or gate that led to his fairy garden.

I felt a strange curiosity to follow this venerable man, there was something both in the appearance of him and his habitation that drew my attention;—hinting my inclinations to Sir Hugh, he bad the coachman stop, and, handing me out, ordered him to drive to the top of the opposite hill, saying to me, he thought it would be agreeable for us to walk up.

When the coach moved off, we strolled round and round an ever-green hedge which furrounded the little garden, having every now
and

94 THE COTTAGE.

and then a peep through openings, cut into the shape of ovals;—at length we reached the hatch the old man had just entered, over which was an arch, composed of the same evergreen with the hedge; here we had a full view both of the cot and garden, which for niceness and order, in a rustick way, are scarce, I believe, to be equalled.

The garden, though small, is divided into several plats, planted with every necessary for their family;—under the windows are, prettily disposed, a variety of common flowers, with five or six beehives on the same bank.

Over

THE COTTAGE. 95

Over the door of this peaceful dwelling there is another little arch, covered thick with jessamin and woodbines, whose luxuriant branches climb naturally round the wood work of the windows.

Sir Hugh, as well as myself, were in such raptures with the outside, that our curiosity was on the rack to behold what could be contained within.

Whilst several schemes were projecting to this purpose, an old woman appeared at the door, knitting a stocking.

I find vast pleasure in particularizing every person, and every thing, on this sweet spot;—I know
your

96 THE COTTAGE.

your ladyship will indulge me,—
I long to describe the old woman's
dress, with twenty other odd mat-
ters my head is full of.

Her gown was linsey woolsey,
or some such manufacture, with
long sleeves that came half way
down her arms,—pinned back at
the sides, and laced almost close
before;—her cap, as to coarseness,
suited well with her gown, but
the snow could not exceed it for
whiteness,—on the forehead a dou-
ble row of small plaits, the same
at both ears, which were of a sur-
prizing length, and turned up over
her head.

So much for my old woman's
dress—your ladyship has not yet
seen

seen her beyond the threshold ;—mark what follows, and confess, if she did not outshine the fairest ever equipped for a birth-night ball.

But to return ;—the good creature seeing us at the gate, hastily laid down her knitting on the bench under the jessamin arch, and smoothing her apron, with two or three low curtsies as she advanced, asked, if our honours would please to walk in and rest ?—

Your ladyship will suppose we instantly embraced the invitation, we waited for no more, but followed our conductress to the door of her little cot ;—In entering the hovel, my eye was immediately

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struck by the uncommon pavement on which they trod,—though it consisted only of smooth pebbles, they were kept so excessively nice and clean, that one might really have supposed them just taken from their native brook.

No sooner did we gain the good woman's kitchen, but she drew out a joint stool from under the table for Sir Hugh,—and *I* was placed next him in a low wooden chair.

Our hostess, in her way, began now to assume an air of some consequence; with a deal of bustle in her countenance, she took from her pocket a bunch of keys, with one of which she opened a corner cupboard; but, whilst she drew
the

the cork of a bottle of mead, and wiped a glass in a corner of her apron, my attention was engaged in taking an inventory of the furniture; perhaps your ladyship never saw any of the kind,—nothing so pleasing as variety.

Did you ever see a dresser, Lady Susan?—The only idea I can give you of one, is this:—a cottager's *cabinet*, a receptacle for what they esteem most *ornamental*,—such as *pewter* plates, dishes, a set of *stone* cups and saucers, with numberless other little matters, which, if seen in the house of a person of fashion, would be considered as nothing;—but here, shining on shelves one above another, with a

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neat white linnen curtain to draw occasionally, cannot fail to please.

Of all the furniture in the old woman's kitchen, I give the preference to an oak table,—so extremely bright, that it might as well serve for a mirror as the use it is intended for.

I wish I may recollect the ornaments over the chimney; but I think they are these:—a spit,—three iron candlesticks, a pair of tobacco tongs, a brass pestle and mortar, and two old delfe images.

Well, Madam, how do you like my old woman's taste?—I'll assure you I like it so well, that I intend

THE COTTAGE. 101

intend to consult her whenever I furnish a house.

But I have not told you, Sir Hugh and I drank a glass of mead; in my conscience I think the good creature would have cried, had we persisted in refusing it.

Just as we were praising the delicious liquor, in hobbled old Isaac; your ladyship must understand, this was our venerable host;—poor Isaac, I shall never forget how he looked, when Sir Hugh rose from his seat, insisting he should sit down next him;—not for the world, and please your *honours*,—scratching his head, and bowing, not for the whole world, would I sit down in the same place with
such

such *great* gentlefolks,—I only stap'd in to ask Sarah if I must pick the arbs for *madam's* broth.

It was now our turn to be surprized, and we looked at each other as if we died to know who this *madam* was; though a woman, my curiosity was not more awakened than Sir Hugh's;—Pray good folks, said he eagerly, what lady is *this* you speak of?—Nobody, and please your honour, answered Sarah, but a poor sick gentlewoman, who was travelling this road, and was took so bad she could go no farther.

The moment she pronounced a sick gentlewoman, I felt an uncommon sensation,—a tinkling in my blood like what one feels from

THE COTTAGE. 103

a sleepy foot;—a *sick* person, I replied,—pray *who* is she?—*What* is her name?—*Is* she dying?—

No, no, cried the old man,—her *isn't* dying, as a body may say, but her won't live a great while, I believe.—Seeing me look astonished, I hope your ladyship don't hurry yourself, *madam's* disorder *isn't* infectious.

Pray, said I, let me see her,—I shall be miserable if a method cannot be thought of just to have a glimpse of her person.

Why, my Lady, replied Sarah, to be sure I wish you could see her,—but what can I do when she

has begged and prayed that we never would let any body know she is here?—She won't so much as have a doctor, though there is a very good one, who keeps a shop not two miles away;—all I can say, *madam* will yield herself for death,—poor gentlewoman, it is great pity;—Isaac and I have cried hours to hear her tell of her funeral,—but she don't shed a tear about it herself;—one would think, by her discourse, it was a charming thing to die.

No soul can imagine how I was struck with this recital,—so indeed was Sir Hugh;—we begged, entreated, used every prevailing argument, before Sarah could be wrought

wrought upon in our favour;—at length she said, rather than offend us she would shew me a crevice in the door of her chamber, where I might see her the same as if I was in the room;—saying this, she went towards the stairs, whilst I followed, getting up after her on the tops of my toes; your ladyship may have some idea of my curiosity, but none of my surprize.

My eye close to the crevice;—my God, what did I behold!—What were my agitations when I discovered Miss Abington, pale as death, just risen from the bed, and reeling towards the window! In my fright, I caught fast hold

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of the old woman, and squeezing her by the arm, cried, Gracious Lord, gracious Lord, it is Miss Abington! *Who* Madam,—*who?* she replied, staring as if I had told her of an apparition,—Why, *no* matter, *no* matter, good dame, come instantly with me.—

Though quick, I descended the stairs very softly, and flying to Sir Hugh, whispered my surprize, asking him, what I could do to let her know I was in the house?—A line by all means, Miss Osborne, said he, and send it up by the old woman;—as near as I can recollect, what I wrote was to this purpose.

Be

“Be not surprized, madam,—accident has brought to this *cot* the person who, with Lady Susan Collingwood, you honoured with a visit at Windsor;—accident has likewise discovered to me the person her ladyship has been making an unwearied, but fruitless search after.

“Permit me, dear madam, to attend you in your bed chamber, permit me to assure you my best services are at your command;—don’t hurry yourself, Miss Abington,—I wait your leisure,—treat freely, I beseech you, one who is impatient to be ranked in the number of your friends.”

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These lines I instantly dispatched, and, in a very few minutes, Sarah returned with Miss Abington's compliments,—that she would be extremely glad to see me.

Sir Hugh, before I left him, was very importunate with me, to try to prevail on her to return with us to *Shafto Place*;—he said he would walk to the top of the hill, and order the carriage down, in hopes I might prevail;—I only said to assure him his commands should be obeyed,—I spoke not another word, but hurried up to her chamber.

How ill did I support the fight!
A fight which made me shrink,
because it displayed more of the
heavenly

heavenly than my earthly frame was able to support.

I thought I should have fainted, I really was sinking very fast, when she rose from her chair, and held out her trembling hand,—a hand, my dear lady, once so plump, once so vermilioned in the inside, is now wasted to the bone;—the bones and fine blue veins seem starting through the skin, her arms fallen away almost to nothing; but her neck,—good God! I sometimes think I shall see her heart.

Her face is little altered since she was at Windsor,—rather paler, and fallen in at the temples, and her eyes have a look, that in my opinion, bodes no great prospect of
her

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her recovery, yet they express something which convey very pleasing ideas.

She arose, as I say, when I entered, and, holding out one of her hands, advanced to meet me;—Miss Osborne, said the sweet, mild creature, I am astonished at your goodness;—but I am more astonished how you came to discover me in this sequestered retreat; she had scarce pronounced those words, when I perceived her tottering backwards; catching her in my arms, I placed her in a chair, or she certainly would have sunk to the ground.

Lord help me, how she looked, when her head fell on my shoulder!

—It

THE COTTAGE. III

—It drooped like a lily falling from the stalk;—I entreated her not to speak, till she had recovered her spirits, protesting never to leave her before I saw her happy.

Happy! happy! Yes, Miss Osborne, that I shall soon be, repeated the angelic sufferer; You are too kind! How can I expect such support from a stranger? Speak not again, my dear Miss Abington, I said, till you are better;—I will not leave you,—think me not a stranger,—I will love you sincerely,—my friendship shall be steady, as if cemented by length of years;—here the good old woman entered with her chicken broth, and telling me the gentleman was

was returned in his chariot, I hastened down to assure him Miss Abington was then too weak to mention his kind proposal,—but that I had determined not to leave her, at the same time desiring, he would make my excuses to Lady Melcombe,—to my father and mother;—with his accustomed good nature he took his leave, giving me a thousand charges about my health,—promising to send for doctor H— from Bath, and bring him here either this evening, or tomorrow morning.

At my return to Miss Abington, I found her spirits much recovered, she had supped in some broth, and was consulting with Sarah what I could have for dinner;—I
told

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told her I would have nothing provided,—that I would eat a bit of bread and butter;—oh, dear my lady, said Sarah, what is bread and butter after a ride, there is half of madam's chick undressed, which may be broiled, and what is boiled in the broth, mayhap, your ladyship ma'n't mislike.

In hopes Miss Abington would eat a morsel, I consented to have the boiled chicken sent up,—but alas, poor soul! she has swallowed nothing but tea and broths for many days.

I am amazed how two such illiterate people as Isaac and Sarah could have any notion of fitting up an apartment,—comfortable, or rather

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rather habitable, for a person of Miss Abington's station.

I cannot describe the elegant neatness displayed in every little matter ;—the curtains, the coverlid on the bed,—the window curtains, the napkin on the table, indeed the whole furniture, though very homely, so extremely neat and clean, that a lady of the first rank might sleep as sweetly here as in an apartment furnished with velvet.

Your ladyship may suppose this strange adventure spoiled my stomach ;—I soon dismissed the old woman, who seemed much concerned that I eat so little.

No

No sooner were we alone, than Miss Abington threw her arms about my neck, and, sobbing aloud,—cried, Dear madam, why all this goodness? Then clasping her hands together, My God, she exclaimed, how merciful!

Do tell me, said I, do tell me, dear Miss Abington, the cause of your distress?—I ask not from idle curiosity,—I ask to partake of it, nothing lightens grief like reposing it in the bosom of a friend.

You shall know all, Miss Osborne, she replied,—I should be low minded, indeed, to hide a secret from a *heart* like yours;—but, my amiable friend, I must entreat you will not discover, what
I shall

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I shall relate, to any but Lady Susan Collingwood, not even, when you marry, to your *husband*.

I assured her she need have no fears on that account, that, if she chose, I would convince her, if she had any fears, they were without foundation.—

I am well satisfied Miss Osborne, she replied,—I have no doubt of your sincerity,—I will proceed to the trials which have brought me to the last ebb of life,—which have brought me to a state of mind, the tranquility of which is above human comprehension;—can I be *too* thankful, my dearest friend—observing my eyes overflowing with tears;—can I be *too* thankful?—

Come,

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Come, you must promise me not to let fall one more pitying drop; if you are so affected, it will prevent me from proceeding;—besides, Miss Osborne, my buffetings are *now* at an end;—what has *fortune* to do in this little *cot*?

Here my eyes streamed afresh, it was some time before I could prevail on her to begin the narrative; when she did begin, it was in an accent so *low*, so feeble, that I apprehended her strength would not serve her to go through with the whole;—if I can send it to your ladyship in her own words, I think I may boast a good memory; I will try, however;—it seems strongly impressed,—so
strongly,

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strongly, as if I felt it engraved on my heart.

Perhaps your ladyship is acquainted with numberless little incidents in her life, which, till now, I have been a stranger to;—but as I know you are likewise a stranger to the material part, I shall begin and end with her;—thus then did she enter on her tragical history.

My misfortunes, Miss Osborne, began very early,—I was left an orphan at three years old,—the estate, my father possessed, being intailed on the male heir, I had nothing for my share but the furniture of the house he lived in, and about five or six hundred pounds

pounds in money; my mother's fortune being nearly spent when my grandfather died, which happened three months before I came into the world.

My father marrying contrary to the consent of his parents, they refused giving up any thing till their death, though my mother was descended from one of the best families in the county.—

On the death of the latter, who did not long survive her husband, I was taken by my father's younger brother, a gentleman much respected for his character,—a man of immense fortune,—a fortune which he had gained by a residence of twenty years in the East Indies;
my

my uncle Edward, the person I am speaking of, brought me up with the same tenderness I might have expected from my parents;—he was profuse in my education,—even at the best schools I had private masters;—he delighted to see me dressed rich and elegant,—was fond of my being in public,—my purse never empty,—servants and equipage at my command.

I was visited by all the families of fashion in the neighbourhood; my uncle took vast pleasure in returning their visits with me,—he was particularly fond of my being with lord and lady Modbrook;—I used to spend whole weeks at their seat,—there it was I first became acquainted with lady Susan Collingwood;

lingwood, indeed, Miss Osborne; I cannot express the satisfaction I experienced from this worthy couple; if they had lived—but what avail fruitless wishes,—it would be even selfish to wish them back.

Here her sweet expressive eyes turned upwards, it was easy to perceive of what object they were in pursuit;—some moments she sat silent,—I did not interrupt her; but when she had recollected herself, she resumed the thread of her discourse.

Perhaps, Miss Osborne, she continued,—*perhaps*, after what I have said, you may imagine I have tasted perfect happiness,—as perfect as we can taste it on this side the

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grave;

grave ;—how deceitful are appearances !—In the midst of affluence,—surrounded by pleasure,—doated on by my uncle,—in the midst of all this I was far from happy, there was something for ever preying on my heart ;—you have not yet heard of my eldest uncle ;—oh, how very different from my uncle Edward ! the eastern blast differs not more from the southern breeze ;—this man inherited my father's *fortune* ;—his *virtues* he was not formed to inherit.

My uncle Edward resembled my father in every thing, but being led by his mercenary brother ; he always treated him with good manners, but, knowing his unhappy

happy disposition, he ever avoided an intimacy;—my uncle Edward, on the contrary, blind to his imperfections, thought every thing he did meritorious.

Newton Hall, the seat my uncle Edward usually resided at, was situated but ten miles distant from my other uncle's;—a horrid mortification to me,—scarce a week after his son came from school, but we had some of the family with us.

The youth being of too much consequence to be trusted at either of the universities, it was thought expedient he should have a private tutor at home;—the gentleman fixed on for that purpose was

really a man of fine understanding; I have been informed, an excellent scholar,—but what could he, or any living creature, make of such a wretch?—What must be the building, where the foundation is mud and clay?

The figure of my *cousin* is such, that one must shrink from, as from a reptile;—but his manners, good God! how very low and despicable!—picture to yourself, miss Osborne, a spoiled child,—a man without *sentiment* or *idea*,—one that knows not what it is to smile, if he sneers you see his best looks.

From an infant he was prone to mischief,—haughty,—cruel,—and reserved,—yet with these blots I
was

was taught, even before I was sixteen, to look on him as a person I must spend my days with.

The moment I understood the designs of Mr. and Mrs. Abington, that *moment* I pronounced myself miserable;—I foresaw my uncle Edward would give into their schemes,—and I foresaw also they had no other method to come at his fortune;—gladly would I have relinquished my right to every shilling he possessed, if by it I could have got rid of my tormentor.

Without making me a downright offer, I was continually teized by his ridiculous compliments; often in my presence his father and mother would say,—You must

do *this* or *that*, Tom,—your *cousin* Jamima dislikes it;—Mr. Abington, I should reply, is certainly his *own* master,—I shall *never* take the liberty to condemn his actions.

My aunt, artful as the most artful of our sex, would answer, Yes, my *dear*, but you *must* condemn him when he is *wrong*,—for *both* your happiness, I *entreat* you will.

Sometimes my patience would be exhausted,—and I would leave the room on any frivolous excuse, at others, I attempted to appear not to understand their meaning, though it was not long before I was made to understand it too clearly.

About

About three years since, lord and lady Modbrook, by the advice of their physicians, were to spend the latter season at Bath,—they importuned me to be of the party,—I was delighted with the proposal, and immediately communicated it to my *uncle*;—at first he seemed rather averse,—but, on seeing how much my heart was fixed on the scheme, he consented,—though I cannot say he consented with that grace he was accustomed to on like occasions.

The morning I was to set out,—lord and lady Madbrook appointed to be at Newton Hall by ten,—Mr. and Mrs. Abington, with their son, arriving the evening
G 4 before

before, to be with my uncle in my absence.

I was all alive at the thoughts of my journey;—my uncle Edward had given me a large purse of guineas, telling me, at the same time, if I wanted a further supply, I should draw on him for what sums I thought proper; how great the mortification which followed!—I paid *dear*,—very *dear*, for this fun blast.

After breakfast, both my *uncles* and *aunt* took an opportunity to withdraw, leaving me alone with the only person in the whole creation hateful to my sight;—I perceived it was by design,—I could
see

see it by the significant looks which were interchanged.

Without preface or parade, the monster snuffled out something like an offer,—but in such a bearish manner, that, for my life, I could not pay him the compliment due to most of his sex,—I could not tell him I was obliged by his preference,—I only said, when he mentioned how agreeable it would be to *my* uncle,—to his father and mother,—not a word did he say it would be agreeable to *himself*;—that I *was* determined,—that nothing should *ever* move my resolves,—and desired, if he wished I might consider him as a *friend*,—as a *relation*, never more to enter on the *disagreeable* subject.

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Very well, *madam*, very well, was all his reply, and twirling his hat on his fist, left the room without deigning me a bow.

Fortunately, instead of going into the garden where were my *uncles* and *aunt*, he flapped the door after him, and flew like lightning to his own apartment;—at this instant, I heard Lord Modbrook's carriage stop, and, dreading a countermand, I put on a cheerful countenance,—one I am sure very foreign from my heart, and ran out hastily to take leave of my *uncle*;—I despise hypocrisy, yet sometimes a little *art* is necessary;—here it certainly was necessary, for had my *features* and *heart* corresponded,—there must have been an end to this journey.

My

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My uncle Edward embraced me tenderly,—my *uncle* and *aunt* Abington, with pretence of tenderness, quite squeezed me to their bosoms;—I suppose they counted me the property of their *cub*, and hugged me closer on that account.

Expecting every moment when my *cousin* would appear, I made what haste I could out of the garden;—my uncle Edward, taking one of my hands, said a thousand affectionate things, as he led me to the *carriage*, committing me to the care of lord and lady Modbrook with the *same* warmth,—the *same* tender affection, as if I had been his only child.

So overwhelmed, by his goodness,—so choaked with tears,—I could scarce utter a last farewell;—but the agreeable company of lord and lady Modbrook,—their sweet affability,—the hopes they gave me of my uncle's steadiness;—that he never would be wrought upon to make me unhappy, all these consolatory reasonings lessened my anxieties, and, by the time I came to the end of my journey, very little of them remained.

Soon after my arrival at Bath, I wrote to my uncle, acquainting him with every incident I thought would amuse,—mentioned the families of distinction there,—gave an account of the diversions, customs, manners, &c. of the place;—as he
never

THE COTTAGE. 133

never had been at Bath, I flattered myself it would entertain him.

The following week, good God! what an answer did it bring me to this letter!—Such a one as I even now shudder to think of;—in a stile most explicit, I was commanded to confirm the hopes he had entertained of seeing me united to his nephew,—at peril of his everlasting displeasure I was commanded never to think of another; my living single, he said, if I meant to plead that, should have no weight;—in short, I must expect to be an outcast at the end of six months, if I did not consent to dispose of myself as he directed.

This

This letter I received as I was dressing to go to a ball and supper, given by lord Modbrook;—the contents absolutely threw me into a state of despair,—I took off all my little ornaments,—I cried, I wrung my hands, pulled my hair about my ears, walking up and down the room like a creature deprived of reason.

The servant, who assisted me to dress, ran to her lady, and told her, she believed my uncle was dead;—her ladyship, pale with surprize, rushing instantly into my apartment, affectionately enquired the cause of my sudden affliction; I could make her no reply, I only put the letter into her hands; I really never saw lady Modbrook so
much

much moved,—I never saw such indignation as flashed from her eyes ;—Your uncle, my dearest creature, said she,—what right has he to force your inclinations?—*My lord shall protect you,—your cousin at his peril shall dare to molest you under this roof,—you shall never return more to Newton Hall,—look on lord Modbrook as your brother,—look on me as your sister,—our house, our fortune, every thing we possess is at your command.*

What a contrast between this noble pair, and the base designers, who wanted me for their son's domestic slave?—Are we all, thought I, moulded of the same clay?—
Can

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Can the pure work of nature be so degenerated?

No doubt, Miss Osborne, after the shock I had sustained,—you will wonder I could be prevailed on to go to the ball;—indeed I have often wondered at it myself,—but what could I do?—Lady Modbrook would not stir without me,—she protested she would not, every entreaty I used proved ineffectual.

It is impossible for me to recollect half the friendly things said by his lordship,—I only know, to my great sorrow, when that charming couple died,—all my hopes of happiness died with them; there seemed a fatality in my going to this ball; it certainly was destined
I should

THE COTTAGE. 137

I should there meet the person who completed my sorrows.

Lord Modbrook went early to the rooms;—her ladyship, in complaisance to me, staid till I was enough composed to go with her.

Most of the people of rank had danced minuets when we entered, and lady Modbrook seating herself on one of the front forms, I placed myself between her ladyship and lady Louisa Williams; a gentleman at that instant pointing me out to the *master* of the *ceremonies*, he immediately advanced, asking if I chose to dance a minuet,—I bowed, and told him I did not chuse to dance that evening;—hearing this, he was about to retire,

retire when lady Modbrook whispered him, saying Miss Abington will dance, Sir;—turning to me, indeed, my dear, you *must*; Mr. D—, she said, in a low voice, is the finest dancer in the kingdom; I saw him send the *master* of the ceremonies.

Excuse me, Miss Osborne, I can only give you the initial of this gentleman's name,—there are many reasons why his name ought to be concealed, not for my own sake do I conceal it, but for the sake of those who have loaded me with infinite obligations.

I assured her I had no curiosity to be acquainted with the secret,—that I doubted not her motives
were

were both *generous* and *prudent*;—my reply pleased her,—she said many genteel things on the occasion, but as I know your ladyship's attention is fixed on the narrative, I shall proceed to it in her own words:

I perceived, said she, lady Modbrook determined, and I suffered her ladyship to answer for me— I must own when Mr. D—— advanced, his graceful figure caused a thousand dreadful comparisons to rush on my imagination;—the hand which I gave up reluctantly to his, seemed convulsed, it seemed as if informed by my heart: How great the difference betwixt my partner in the dance, and him I was commanded to consider as a partner

partner for my life?—Lady Modbrook's eyes sparkled with joy as he led me back to my seat;—I shall never forget her expressive look, when he appeared importunate to engage me for the evening; this I absolutely refused,—I told him I should play at cards with lady Modbrook.

Lady Modbrook, he exclaimed, looking round,—I have the honour of her acquaintance;—pray is she here, madam?

Her ladyship, who was just at my elbow, replied with an air of good-natured raillery, I am not surprized Mr. D——, I pardon your overlooking me; what he said in return I know not, but I observed

THE COTTAGE. 141

observed he whispered her, and smiled;—by a conversation which ensued, I found he had been long acquainted with lord and lady Modbrook,—that they lived neighbours in town, and used to visit without ceremony.

When country dances began, Mr. D——, instead of taking out a partner, sat himself down in the seat lady Louisa Williams had just vacated,—I attempted to appear cheerful,—I attempted to hide my heavy afflictions, but in vain *did* I attempt to hide them; if the tongue is silent, the heart will speak,—it was reminding me of my hated *cousin*,—tormenting me with the remembrance of Mr. and Mrs. Abington;—glad was I when
her

her ladyship proposed going into the card room;—Mr. D—— offered her ladyship to make one at *quadrille*, mentioning the dowager countess of Linsdale as another; this being assented to, the party was formed, and we played till near eleven.

At supper many of the gentlemen refused sitting down;—Mr. D—— never left me a moment,—he stood the whole time leaning on the back of my chair.

One would have supposed, by lord Modbrook's natural ease and gaiety, he had been entertaining a few chosen friends at his own house;—endowed with an art peculiar to himself, he charmed all degrees,—

degrees, all dispositions; the *haughty* would bend to him,—the *envious*, touched by his transcendent goodness, appeared to have forgot their tormentor;—from the *frowning* he called forth *smiles* of joy,—the *impertinent* and *forward* he awed even to diffidence.

His lordship,—so did lady Modbrook turn their eyes incessantly towards me;—I frequently caught them stealing a congratulatory glance from each other, as if both flattered themselves with some pleasing discovery.

As Mr. D— led us to our chairs, he told lord Modbrook, he intended breakfasting with him the next morning; his lordship's countenance

tenance expressed something more than pleasure, when he assured Mr. D—— how glad he should be to see him.

The instant we got home, my two friends hurried me up to her ladyship's dressing room, when each catching me in their arms, declared I had gained a conquest worthy myself;—I don't know what they did not say, to raise my vanity;—lady Modbrook protested, she made the first discovery, his lordship, that he had; such a *charming* man, cried one,—such a *person*, such a *character*, echoed the other;—well, my Jamima, this is a match cannot fail to please your *uncle*;—if we are right in our conjectures, said her ladyship,

your

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your good for nothing *cousin* will lose all his hopes.

Bless me! whose carriage is this driving down the hill?—Not my father's sure, so late in the evening;—yes, it is my father's, I know it by old Don's running by the side;—down goes my pen,—I will now send away what I have wrote,—to morrow at the earliest dawn I return, to give your ladyship the remainder of this melancholy story.—Yours, most sincerely, my dear lady,

AUGUSTA OSBORNE.

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H

LET.

LETTER XIV.

From the same to the same.

MY father nor mother have yet seen Miss Abington, neither has Sir Hugh, or lady Melcombe;—she was in a sweet sleep the whole time they staid, and had been so more than an hour before they came in;—I imagine she was fatigued, it is not her custom, I find, to sleep till one in the morning.

Doctor H— is to be here this evening;—Sir Hugh dispatched a messenger to him the moment he got home;—I long to hear what

he

THE COTTAGE. 147

he says,—I have yet great hopes she is not past the skill of Physic.

Poor Isaac and Sarah look frightened out of their wits ;—I with the twenty guineas Sir Hugh gave the former, with the like sum put into the hands of the latter by my mother, may not have disturbed the rest of this good old couple.

I was vastly glad my mother thought of bringing Alice with her,—she is amazingly clever about sick people,—something in her manners soft and gentle,—very fit to attend Miss Abington.

The old lady, I hear, is mighty busy ;—I suppose Alice is assisting her in putting away the stores

lady Melcombe brought,—her ladyship has really laid in sufficient for a long siege.

Pardon, dear lady Susan, this interruption;—where did I break off;—ay, I am right, Miss Abington was in lady Modbrook's dressing room;—very well, your ladyship must now attend to Miss Abington.

Thus, Miss Osborne, did lord and lady Modbrook run on, whilst I, transported by their goodness, appeared the veriest fool in nature; I knew them sincere, but then I knew their partiality,—I knew how sanguine their hopes, where a friend was concerned.

When

When we parted for the night, they entreated I would think no more of my *cousin*,—said, I must tell them my dreams in the morning,—that they expected to find my *threatning uncle* changed to an *indulgent parent*.

Oh, Miss Osborne, very different did I pass the night from what this angelic couple endeavoured to persuade me; no dreams, not even a friendly slumber, would visit my aching eyelids,—I would start, and shrink down in the bed, at recollection of my uncle's dreadful menace, my tortured imagination brought close to my curtains the horrible figure of my detested cousin;—if I thought of Mr. D—, it was only to encrease my anxieties,—

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eties,—it made vice and meanness appear the blacker, by holding up against it the bright form of virtue;—could I suppose any thing but virtue dwelt with grace,—mildness,—and condescension?

How did I deceive myself!—How greatly have I been deceived!—Here she sighed as if it had been her last plaintive sound; I only kissed her cheek,—I did not speak, and she proceeded.

Long,—very long, was this melancholy night,—I fancied time had changed its course,—that it was travelling backwards;—at length the cheerful morning broke through my curtains,—I lifted my head from the pillow to bid it welcome,—I blushed

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blushed when the first ray darted on me, I blushed, and conscious it would behold why I wished for its approach.

Tired of my bed, I got up at six, before I could scarce see to put my cloaths, amusing myself till ten with lord Corke's remarks on Pliny;—at that hour lady Modbrook came into my apartment;—My dear, said she, lay down your book, breakfast is on the table,—Mr. D— is in the dining room with my lord.

Before she had done speaking, in ran lady Paulina Hudson,—the only child, and now orphan of the lovely pair I have been speaking of,—sweet infant, scarce three years old

when she lost both parents;—here again my dear afflicted friend sighed deep;—Ma'am, said the smiling cherub, as her Ladyship was stooping to take her in her arms,—you must not stay to kiss me,—pappa has sent to acquaint you and Miss Abington, he and the gentleman below will be starved, if you keep them longer without their breakfast.

I thought her ladyship would have smothered the sweet dove-like messenger,—she kissed her eyes, her neck, her hands,—bidding her go tell my lord, we would be with him instantly.

His lordship was smiling on his faithful embassadess, when we entered the dining room.

It

It is well you are come, Miss Abington, said he, Mr. D— and I have been railing at you sadly ;— why so, my lord, I replied, at the same time receiving a graceful bow from Mr. D—; being seated at the tea table, he began to enquire after my health,—hoped I got no cold,—*hoped* a multiplicity of things, which dwell on my memory like all other compliments.

Our conversation, the time of breakfast, was chiefly of the last evening, and how we should dispose of ourselves till dinner ;—the weather being fine, lady Modbrook proposed an airing ;—the scheme meeting with general approbation, his lordship ordered the coach at the door by twelve.

—Lady Paulina, prattling on my knee, asked where we were going; lady Modbrook, to hear what the child would say,—answered, why, Paulina, we are going to carry Miss Abington home;—the dear little creature, bursting with tears, replied, Is *this* gentleman come to fetch her, *mamma*? Indeed, Sir, getting off my knee, and jumping up to Mr. D—, throwing her little snowy arms about his neck, indeed and indeed, Sir, if you will go without my Jamima,—I will give you my best wax doll.

Never shall I forget *how* we all looked;—lady Modbrook was dyed like scarlet,—his lordship, with a smile he attempted to suppress, walked towards the window,—for
my

my part, I turned pale as death,—
Mr. D— cautiously avoided my
eye, but I could perceive in his,
pleasure, mingled with certain *awe*,
as if he felt *my* confusion and suf-
fered in it.

You little charmer, said he, with
an air all gaiety, don't be afraid,
Miss Abington won't let me carry
her away,—she is *too* good and *too*
pretty; I am glad of that, she re-
turned,—if she is *too* good and *too*
pretty for you, nobody else will
carry her away.

What would have become of me
I cannot imagine, if her French
governess had not that moment
taken her from us.

Lady Modbrook compassionating my confusion, asked if I would put on my hat and cloak in her dressing room,—it is impossible to express how glad I was of an excuse to withdraw,—I could have crept up the chimney, or any where, to escape the observation of Mr. D—.

Her ladyship, when we were shut out from the gentlemen, laughed excessively at the penetration of lady Paulina, saying, she believed her daughter was a little witch.

The words but just escaped her, when I heard a carriage drive up to the door,—as his lordship had not ordered his till twelve, and it wanted ten minutes of that time,

I went

I went to the window, thinking it might be a gentleman's family in the next street, who called most mornings to ask if we would go out with them.

Gracious heaven! what was my surprize, what my thousand, thousand fears, when I discovered it to be my *uncle's* chariot, with six horses all in a foam?—Oh, dear madam, I screamed,—I am ruined,—I am undone,—my *uncle's* chariot,—see there, my *uncle's* chariot,—I am sent for to marry my detestable *cousin*;—save me lady Modbrook, do call my *lord*,—do, let *him* protect me.

At this instant his lordship alarmed by my cries, entered the
room,

room,—Mr. D— followed him,—but he only followed him to the door, there he stood, his clenched fist to his forehead,—his eyes flashing fire,—his whole form full of phrenzy; lord Modbrook said every thing to calm me,—he declared the world should not tempt him to give me up, that my *cousin* should never call me his.

Her ladyship observing Mr. D—, hastily withdrew with him to the dining room, leaving me to peruse a letter, just delivered by her ladyship's woman,—the contents informed me my *uncle* a few days before was seized with a fit of apoplexy, that fearing a return, he requested I would set out for ————
 shore with all expedition;—lord
 Modbrook

Modbrook shook his head, protesting he believed it was a contrivance of my *uncle* and *aunt* Abington, however, he said, he would strictly examine the servants, and let me know the result.

As he left the room, lady Modbrook whispered me, the door being still open, that Mr. D— was like a creature distracted;—oh, dearest friend, I cried,—oh, my dear lady, why should Mr. D— be distracted, undoubtedly he is very good and very compassionate,—but I am sorry *he* should distress himself about *me*,—a stranger, an acquaintance only of a day,—indeed, lady Modbrook, I begin to suspect his sincerity.

Before she could reply, his lordship returned, telling me he really believed

believed my *uncle* had been ill,—that he examined the servants separately, and could discover no marks of falsehood in what they related.

I cannot paint how greatly lord and lady Modbrook were affected, they knew not, as my duty was concerned, how to persuade me from going,—or to part with me in such dreadful circumstances,—indeed, no rhetoric should have prevailed,—my *uncle's* indisposition was sufficient for an immediate determination.

I gave orders for fresh horses, for the servants to get ready with all expedition, then, unknowing what I did, I followed lord and lady Modbrook to the dining room, his

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his lordship protesting he would see me safe into —shire; the sight of Mr. D— prevented my replying;—from that moment Miss Osborne, I flattered myself he loved me, his tender respect, his concern, the melancholy which spoke in his eyes, all helped to deceive.

Her ladyship sat down by me on the window seat, her handkerchief held up to her eyes,—his lordship walked up and down, exclaiming how unfortunate the event that tore me from them.

Mr. D—, with awe next to reverence, approaching the window where we sat, and gently lifting my almost lifeless hand to his lips, with a look I then thought sufficient

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cient to repay me for an age of
 sorrow, asked if I would suffer
~~him~~ to make me happy;—Miss
 Abington, he continued, I know
 your intrinsic worth, I should not
 have aspired, till my fortune, my
 rank, had made me more worthy;
 it is the danger of losing you that
 has thrown down all obstacles;—
 before lord Modbrook, before his
 lady, I solemnly protest, still
 holding my hand, I sinking with
 confusion, without you, without
hopes you will one day be *mine*,
 England shall no more be bur-
 thened with my feet;—hear me,
 dear Miss Abington, for he per-
 ceived I was about to reply;—hear
 me with patience: you will say, per-
 haps, our acquaintance is *short*, that
 you know *nothing* of my character;
I only

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I only entreat you will bid me hope, that you will not give me up; only say, if you do not find me a *dissembler*.

I looked down, I sighed, never was any creature so much at a loss; I looked at lady Modbrook;—What can I do? I cried, What can I say? Oh, Mr. D—, turning to him, never seek an alliance with the unfortunate: I was going on, when his lordship interrupted me, with pleasure dancing in his eyes; my dear Jamima, said he, how often have you declared lady Modbrook the pattern you wish to follow;—follow her in *this*,—tell Mr. D—— what she told *your* friend;—*tell* him, you despise the artifice of your sex,—tell him,

to

to make *another* happy, is making *yourself* doubly so.

I do not know what I said, or whether I said any thing, I trembled like an aspen leaf;—Mr. D—, frantic with joy, fell at my feet, he fell at the feet of lady Modbrook, his eyes, confirming the numberless transports his tongue expressed, this flattering scene is vanished like a shadow, I forget what followed, only I recollect his lordship so far prevailed, that I permitted Mr. D— to attend me to L—, a town within six miles of Newton Hall, I likewise consented he should wait at Modbrook house till there was a convenient opportunity to mention him to my uncle.—

Her.

Her ladyship said every thing to comfort me, every thing to dispel my fears, protesting nothing but her health should detain her at *Bath* five weeks longer.

Sure fate whispered me her doom, and that of her much loved lord,—else why at every embrace did my blood chill and freeze as if I had felt the fatal conqueror's hand ;—but, Miss Osborne, I shall tire you with my narrative ; to me it is a melancholy pleasing task,—I consider not how tedious to another.

I begged her to go on, that I longed to be acquainted with every incident, and hoped, I said, all her unhappy days were past ;—she thanked

thanked me, and after wiping some faint drops from her face, proceeded.—

When I left lady Modbrook, I flew to the nursery;—lady Paulina wearied with play, was just fallen asleep,—sliding to the bed, I stole a kiss from the smiling infant, then with reluctant feet went down into the parlour where lord Modbrook and Mr. D— waited.

The carriage standing at the door, I hastened out;—whilst Mr. D— was giving me his hand, I looked up to take a last farewell of my dear, my ever honoured lady Modbrook.

With

With swollen eyes she returned me a tender parting glance, and when I sent her a look all gratitude, she lifted up her hands, turning from the window, with marks of heart-piercing sorrow.

Nothing material happened on the road,—his lordship, all I could say, would not take leave of me till he saw me safe on the borders of —; oh, Miss Osborne, how I wept, how I sobbed when he told Mr. D— he loved me like a sister, and as such, he delivered me up to his protection;—tears, drop after drop, fell from my eyes on his hand,—a hand, his virtuous mind told me, I might venture to lift to my lips.

According

According to the plan laid down by lord Modbrook, Mr. D— left me at L—, but not till I had promised to write him a line the next morning ;—farther he prevailed on me to say, in case of *threats* or *force*, to draw me into a marriage with my *cousin*, a messenger should that instant be dispatched to Modbrook-house.



End of the First Volume.

